

# **System Configuration Team (SCT)**

## **Reasonable & Prudent Measure #26**

### **Meeting Notes**

**January 22, 1999**

# **DRAFT**

## **I. Greetings and Introductions.**

The January 22 meeting of the System Configuration Team was held at the National Marine Fisheries Service offices in Portland, Oregon. The meeting was co-chaired by Bill Hevlin of NMFS and Jim Ruff of the Northwest Power Planning Council staff, and was facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The agenda and a list of attendees for the January 22 meeting are attached as Enclosures A and B.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced may be too lengthy to routinely include with the meeting notes; copies of all enclosures referred to in the minutes are available upon request from Kathy Ceballos of NMFS at 503/230-5420.

## **II. FFDRWG Updates.**

Rebecca Kalamasz of the Corps described items discussed at the most recent Walla Walla District Fish Facility Design Review Work Group meeting. As you're all aware, she said, there are several categories of funding for AFEP proposals: those that have been funded, those that are in final development and waiting for SCT funding approval, those that are unfunded, but are being discussed for development, and those that are unfunded and on hold because of technical difficulties. What I wanted to talk about first, said Kalamasz, are those proposals that have been reviewed and supported by the Studies Review Work Group; I would like SCT to say yes or no to those studies today, so that the contracting process can get underway B time is getting very tight.

The studies in question include the spill study at Ice Harbor Dam, the estuary PIT-tag

study, the evaluation of the Lower Monumental juvenile bypass facility, the comparison of radio tag and PIT-tag recoveries and PIT-tag recoveries from the avian islands. Kalamasz said copies of these proposals are available if anyone has not yet seen them, adding that all of the proposals have been worked through the SRWG process and are now in final form.

Rod Woodin of WDFW and Steve Pettit of IDFG, both SRWG participants, said they have reviewed the Corps= proposals, and have no problem with them as modified. The total FY=99 cost of the work outlined in these proposals is \$1.794 million. With \$4 million-\$5 million in unspent monies still in the FY=99 CRFM budget, there is funding available for these proposals, added Ruff.

Hevlin said NMFS supports these studies; BPA, the Corps, WDFW, IDFG, the Council and ODFW also indicated support for funding these proposals. It sounds as though you have SCT approval to move forward, Rebecca, Silverberg said.

There are also the unfunded proposals, Kalamasz said. I have requested that those who are involved in our technical review to set a date for making their recommendations about how they would like to proceed from here, she said; I have streamlined the list down to four proposals that they actually need to review. One is a Portland District proposal to evaluate alternative methods for estimating spill survival and assessing the effects of flow deflectors on smolt survival (less than \$15,000); the others are temperature monitoring in the Snake River reservoirs, a field evaluation of descaling (both studies under \$80,000), and a lamprey survival evaluation at McNary (funding details unknown). The other proposals in the unfunded category are either not supported for funding, or are being discussed under other technical groups, Kalamasz said.

After some minutes of further discussion, Kalamasz requested that any of the SRWG participants present contact her as soon as possible with some possible dates when they can meet to finalize their recommendations on the unfunded studies. It was so agreed.

Moving on, COE=s Bob Willis distributed minutes from the January 11 Portland District FFDRWG meeting, detailing the discussion topics and updates presented at that meeting (attached as Enclosure C). He added that the Environmental Assessment of the Caspian tern situation on Rice Island is complete; wheat seeding and habitat work is now underway. No lawsuits have been filed as yet, he said.

Rudd Turner of the Corps provided an overview of the list of FY=99 funded proposals, final proposals supported for funding by SRWG, and unfunded proposals that have moved to another forum for discussion and development, that have been discussed in the Corps= AFEP

process. This list is attached as Enclosure D. At Boyce=s request, Turner said it would be possible to provide funding amounts for the studies that are funded and that are supported for funding by the SRWG.

### **III. Bonneville PH1: Discussion of the Timing of the Decision on FGE/DSM/Outfall vs. Surface Bypass.**

Doug Clarke of the Corps led this discussion; he distributed a schedule, showing the implementation schedule (FY=97->01) for passage improvements at Bonneville Dam (attached as Enclosure E). As you=ll recall, he said, during the FY=99 prioritization, it was agreed to defer the B1 bypass improvement implementation schedule from 2001 to 2002. When we deferred that schedule one year, we deferred our planned advertisement for the B1 bypass improvement contracts until June 15, 2000, he explained B that is the latest we can advertise and still be ready for the critical first in-water work period available to meet a 2002 implementation.

At the last FFDRWG meeting in Portland, Clarke continued, we discussed the 2000 surface collection test; during that discussion, I reminded the other participants that, if we are to meet the 2002 implementation schedule, the region needs to make a decision by June 15, 2000. That means we will only have preliminary spring data from the 2000 extended-length screen test, he said. Evidently, that point hadn=t been made clear during our earlier discussion of this issue, said Clarke, and the FFDRWG members were extremely concerned that we couldn=t make a regional decision based on this preliminary spring data alone. As a result, FFDRWG is now recommending that we defer the advertisement of the contract for the B1 JBS improvements for an additional year, to allow a fuller analysis of both the spring and summer data from the 2000 test. Obviously, this would delay implementation of these improvements until 2003, Clarke said.

Delaying the implementation of this BiOp measure another year means the Corps will need to consult with NMFS, Clarke continued. I wanted to report to SCT that that was the FFDRWG recommendation, and to seek SCT concurrence with that recommendation, he said.

After a few minutes of discussion, Silverberg asked whether any SCT members disagreed with the need to defer contract advertisement for this work for one year; no disagreement was expressed. Hevlin observed that, under the terms of the 1995 BiOp, implementation of the B1 bypass improvements was supposed to have occurred by 2000. Given that fact, he said, there is a need for the SCT to address interim survival improvements at Bonneville to compensate for this delay.

### **IV. 1999 Spill Planning for The Dalles, Bonneville and John Day B Update.**

Hevlin introduced this item by saying that, while it is unlikely that the SCT can come to agreement about 1999 spill planning today, it=s important to begin to establish a plan for resolution. He asked NMFS= Gary Fredricks to provide an overview of NMFS= ideas about the 1999 spill program and test approach at The Dalles and John Day.

Fredricks distributed a document describing what, in NMFS= view, the 1997 and >98 research at The Dalles is telling the region, and where these observations take us (attached as Enclosure F). Among the highlights:

64% spill survivals appear to be lower than acceptable to barely acceptable (75-92%)  
30% spill survivals appear to be acceptable to barely acceptable (90-96%)  
Sluiceway survivals appear to be acceptable to barely acceptable.  
30% spill appears to provide the best project passage survival, BUT high sluiceway survival and low turbine entrainment are key components.  
Low turbine entrainment and high sluiceway survival must hold true under a constant project operation at lower spill and total flow levels.

Fredricks= handout also included some NMFS recommendations about which activities should be pursued in 1999. These items include:

Retest spill and sluiceway survivals at 30% spill  
Retest FPE through all routes at 30% spill.  
No project management changes until these tests are completed and reviewed.  
Begin fine-tuning spill tests (pattern etc.)

Please see Enclosure F for further details of Fredricks= presentation.

Hevlin also distributed Enclosure G, a January 21 memo from Bob Heinith of CRITFC to Brian Brown of NMFS, expressing the Tribes= concurrence with the Fish Passage Center=s comments on the spill test issue, as well as recommendations that NMFS obtain independent scientific review of its proposed study methodology by the ISAB, that relative survival of all passage routes from The Dalles be evaluated before spill operations are modified, and that NMFS should consider a life history and an all-species perspective when considering changes to spill operations that could impact anadromous fish. The memo requests a government-to-government consultation on this issue, pursuant to the 1996 Secretarial Order.

The group devoted considerable discussion to this agenda item; ultimately, given the fact that this is an extremely important and contentious issue with implications reaching to the heart of the 1998 supplemental Biological Opinion, and the fact that there is no technical consensus about what the 1997 and 1998 study data results actually mean, the SCT agreed on the need to formulate a plan to address it effectively. It was further agreed that the first element of that plan will be a special technical meeting to discuss those study results, as well as proposals for 1999 spill and studies at The Dalles and John Day Dams. This meeting was set for Thursday, February 11, from 9 a.m. to noon at NMFS= Portland offices. At that meeting, Gary Fredricks said he will present a more detailed white paper, pulling together all of the available information on this issue.

It was further agreed that the second step in the plan to address the spill test issue will be for BPA to provide information on the economic, transmission and power-related concerns relating to spill decisions at John Day, The Dalles and Bonneville. BPA will put together a briefing, to be held some time in late February, addressing these issues. It was further agreed to

ask Ted Bjornn to make a presentation on his recent adult passage work at the February 17 SCT meeting.

## **V. Corps O&M Budget Questions.**

BPA's Phil Thor provided an overview of the various agreements under which BPA provides funds for fish and wildlife projects in the region. The first of these agreements, signed in 1995, is the Fish Cap, he said, also known as the Fish and Wildlife Memorandum of Understanding (MOA). That is the \$435 million figure people have heard mentioned, which is the average annual expenditure on four components (direct program, reimbursable of fish and wildlife expenses to other agencies, capital expenditures and operational impacts) over a six-year period, 1996-2001, Thor explained.

I think the thing most people wanted to focus on was the reimbursable category, specifically, the Corps component of that category, which averages about \$20.8 million over the six-year period, Thor continued.

Agreement 2 was signed more recently, in 1998, he explained. That is the direct funding agreement for the Corps' O&M expenses B direct funding in the sense that the Corps no longer gets its money from Congress in an appropriation; rather, it is made available by Bonneville directly to the Corps. For FY-99, Bonneville's total obligation to the Corps under this agreement is \$106 million. This includes power-specific funding, for which BPA has sole responsibility, and joint use funding B things like spillways, recreation areas, fish facilities and cultural resources B for which BPA's share is the power allocation for each of the projects.

It seems as though there are two avenues for O&M funding, said Hevlin B one is the direct funding agreement, and the other is the fish cap agreement. What can those be used for, and what are the restrictions on their use? he asked. The reimbursable portion for fish and wildlife expenses in the fish cap MOA is totally included in the direct funding O&M agreement, Thor replied. That means the \$20.8 million in average funding that is in the fish cap for the Corps' fish and wildlife expenses is part of the \$106 million for FY-99. In the direct funding agreement, BPA has not specified how that \$106 million is allocated between fish and wildlife expenses, other joint expenses and power-specific expenses, Thor explained. There is \$6 million of the \$106 million that is spread among the projects for something called Anon-routine work,@ he said. The remaining \$100 million in 1999 is allocated by projects, but is not allocated within the projects by use B in other words, it's a pool of money the Corps divides up without specific direction from BPA.

What about items like the Dworshak Hatchery improvements? asked Ruff B I understand that a study plan is still needed to identify exactly what needs to be done, but could that work would be funded through the BPA direct program, and might it be accomplished sooner if that was the case? Yes, BPA could direct-fund that work, because we direct-fund the power share of all of the Corps' O&M expenses, Thor replied. However, we do not have a mechanism to

increase the \$106 million by direct-funding an O&M expense for the Corps. The question is, does the Corps have the flexibility to accomplish that work within the \$106 million? he said.

Thor distributed a spreadsheet, detailing the various categories and amounts within the Corps= FY=99 Corps annual power budget for 19 hydropower projects in the basin (attached as Enclosure H). The group spent a few minutes going over its contents; please see this documents for details.

One key question, said NMFS= Steve Rainey: is there any way to spring an activity free of the category under which it would normally be funded B pump overhaul at McNary, for example B so that it could be funded under another category besides non-routine maintenance, if funding was available within a different O&M category? Also, is there any way for other entities besides the Corps to provide input into how the non-routine maintenance budget is spent? If you're talking about the fish and wildlife portion of the non-routine maintenance budget, the fish and wildlife agencies and tribes are involved in those prioritizations, the Corps= Gary Johnson replied. On the power side, the Corps makes the decisions.

In response to another question, Johnson noted that the reason the funding level for non-routine maintenance items is dwindling is that the region is adding new facilities to the system, but the overall O&M budget is not growing at the same rate. The new outfall and smolt bypass system at Bonneville is a good example, he said B that is the type of project that sucks up non-routine funding because it imposes new routine maintenance funding demands. That's a critically important issue for this group, said Rainey B adequate maintenance of existing facilities is required because otherwise, the facilities don't operate at their optimum level, and fish suffer. The cuts have to come somewhere, to make up that shortfall, and non-routine maintenance has been one of the areas that has suffered.

Thor noted that, originally, the \$106 million in direct funding was split \$46 million to joint (fish and wildlife) expenses and \$59 million to power expenses. Prior to this year, that split was changed to \$54 million to joint expenses and \$52 million for power expenses, a reflection of the emphasis on fish and wildlife and other joint uses. I would suspect that, in future years, similar power/joint expense shifts will occur, Thor said, despite the fact that the power system is farther along the road to degradation and repair than most aspects of the fish passage system.

What about the Dworshak Hatchery improvements, said Boyce B is there any way we can find the funds for this work within the existing O&M budget? You can always look for ways to fund a project like that, but you also have to look at the impact on other aspects of the budget of moving money from category to category, Johnson replied. In fact, Division is going to be talking to our corporate board about this very subject on Monday B they'll be talking about Chief Joseph flow deflectors, the problem with the stilling basin at Lower Monumental, as well as the Dworshak Hatchery situation. These are new items that aren't in the budget, said Johnson; the question is, how do we want to manage for those? Ruff suggested that the Corps look at pp. 3-4 of the December SCT meeting minutes B that's a pretty good reflection of how the SCT feels

about the Dworshak Hatchery improvements.

It sounds as though it may be possible to find the \$200,000 needed for the Dworshak Hatchery study in FY-99 somewhere in the Corps budget, said Hevlin. When the time comes to find the \$12 million-\$20 million needed to do the actual work, it may make the most sense to go to Congress and request a separate appropriation, just as you'll likely do for the Chief Joseph flip-lips. That's always an option, Johnson agreed. When you do that, would it be helpful to have a Regional Forum committee like this one weigh in in support of that request? Hevlin asked. Definitely, Johnson replied. Perhaps, then, that's where we can be helpful, Hevlin said.

Johnson distributed an additional spreadsheet, showing the Portland District FPOM rankings of the non-routine maintenance items to be funded under the FY-00 reimbursable budget (this document is attached as Enclosure I). The Corps is now soliciting input from FPOM on the FY-01 budget; that list is expected to be developed at the February 11 FPOM meeting. In response to a question from Bob Heinith, Johnson said a similar list is developed annually by the Corps= Walla Walla District; the Corps makes the final determination about relative prioritizations between the two districts.

Ruff noted that the Independent Scientific Review Panel will be beginning its review of the BPA reimbursable budget soon, including the O&M and CRFM portions of that budget. It will be a broad-brush review, similar to what the ISRP did for the direct budget in the first year of that program, he said; the ISAB will be relying heavily on the ISAB review reports of the CRFM program, he explained. Next year and the year after that, however, I would expect the ISRP's review to become more detailed, said Ruff.

The group spent a few minutes discussing the prioritization process for routine O&M funding; ultimately, Hevlin said this is an issue the SCT needs to discuss further at one of its future meetings.

## **VI. Discussion of Chief Joseph/Grand Coulee Gas Abatement Study Coordination.**

Kathy Hacker said the Corps met with Reclamation and BPA on January 6 to begin to develop the scope of work for the joint Chief Joseph/Grand Coulee gas abatement study. Most of this discussion centered on the fact that, as we evaluate those two projects, we need to keep a systemwide perspective in mind, she said. At the meeting, Hacker continued, we came away with a plan of action for a broad-based, reconnaissance-level systemwide evaluation. The Corps agreed to develop a computer model to give us a better idea of system effects with Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph. All of this is very preliminary, Hacker said; we're just about finished with the draft study plan now.

My understanding is that the model you referred to is a spreadsheet model to look at gas abatement at Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph, and that it includes only an input to Lake Roosevelt and an output from Chief Joseph, said Ruff B is that as far as it goes at this point?

Actually, it's more comprehensive than that, replied Bolyvong Tanovan of the Corps B it will be spreadsheet-based, but we'll be able to pull in everything from Grand Coulee and Lower Granite down to the estuary. It will include some optimization capability, so that we can load in operational constraints and runoff information at each project, he said B basically, we'll be able to follow the spill priority list and develop estimates of TDG levels below each project for the April-August period. The model will also include the Mid-Columbia projects? Hevlin asked. All of the existing projects, yes, Tanovan replied.

We have been discussing the development of a systemwide gas abatement model in the Transboundary Gas Group, Ruff said B I'm hoping that the Corps model will assist us in that effort, rather than being duplicative. I think that will be the case, Tanovan replied. That's certainly the assumption we were under when we met on January 6, Hacker added. In response to another question from Ruff, Tanovan said he hopes to have the model developed and ready for use no later than late April 1999.

## **VII. John Day Drawdown Phase I -- Review of Scope of Study Plan.**

Bob Willis provided an overview of what the Corps is doing in terms of the biological portion of the John Day drawdown study. He said the Phase 1 scope of study is now complete, and should have been distributed to everyone on the SCT by now. The actual Phase 1 study is only going to determine whether or not to take the study to the feasibility stage, Willis explained, comparable to what the Corps is doing with the Lower Snake study. In terms of schedule, the Corps is targeting the end of this fiscal year B September B for the completion of the Phase 1 report. At that point, there will be a series of public involvement meetings; once that process is complete, the Corps will make its final recommendations some time in December.

On the biological portion of the analysis, Willis continued, the Corps is looking to NMFS to provide a recommendation as to whether or not this study should proceed to the next level. We have also engaged the Fish and Wildlife Service, he said, because eventually, under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, we will be required to produce a Coordination Act report. The Fish and Wildlife Service will be asked to provide their recommendation; the Corps will also seek a consensus recommendation from the state and tribal fish and wildlife agencies. The Corps is also seeking to engage PATH in this effort, in the hopes of obtaining at least a basic PATH analysis of the biological effects of John Day drawdown, Willis said.

There are also some additional pieces of information the Corps will be putting together to flesh out this study, Willis said. We will be finalizing the minimum operating pool studies that were begun a few years ago; we will be conducting a habitat use evaluation through the USGS, a resident fish impacts study through U of I; we may also be doing some additional PIT-tag travel time and reach survival work. All of this information will be pulled together in the May-June time-frame, Willis said, again, with the goal of producing the final Phase 1 report by September. Willis added that the Corps welcomes any additional ideas the SCT participants may have about other elements that should be included in the study.



In response to a question from Heinith, John Kranda said the Corps will likely contract out most of the economic side of the John Day analysis. Willis added that COE's Stuart Stanger will be available to give a presentation on the economic side of this analysis at the February SCT meeting, if the other participants feel this would be helpful. So in terms of action on this item, said Silverberg, it sounds as though the Corps is seeking input from the SCT and other parties in the region on this study; also, Stuart Stanger will be attending the next SCT meeting to answer any questions people may have on the economic side of the analysis. That's correct, Kranda replied.

In response to a question, Ruff said he does not believe there is any opposition among the Power Planning Council membership to studying John Day drawdown; in fact, he said, several Council members wanted to see McNary drawdown studied as well. I think they'll want to see what's in the Corps' Phase 1 report before they make a recommendation about further study, he said, but I don't think you'll hear any objections to the idea from the Council.

#### **VIII. Criteria Development for FY=00 SCT Prioritizations.**

This item was not substantively discussed at today's meeting, although Ruff and Hevlin agreed to attempt to integrate the criteria for studies and capital projects prior to the next SCT meeting, so that the group has a document to work from.

#### **IX. Next SCT Meeting Date and Agenda Items.**

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for Wednesday, February 17, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at NMFS' Portland offices. A technical meeting, to discuss passage information and studies related to the spill programs at The Dalles and John Day Dams, was set for Thursday, February 11, from 9 a.m. to noon at NMFS' Portland offices. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.